

# Intangible Cultural Heritage Update

News and updates  
on Newfoundland and Labrador's  
Intangible Cultural Heritage  
Program

April 2009  
ISSN 1918-7408

[ich@heritagefoundation.ca](mailto:ich@heritagefoundation.ca)  
Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Issue



## In this issue

- Page 1 ACH Program
- Page 2 Passing it Along  
The Eyes of a Hunter
- Page 3 Sheshatshiu, St. George's  
and Exploits
- Page 4 Traditional Knowledge
- Page 5 Conne River Powwow



## Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Program

*By Lucy Drown, Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation*

In 2008 the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation announced the creation of a pilot program to support initiatives that will safeguard Aboriginal traditions and culture for generations to come. The pilot year provided \$95,000 in funding for projects such as documentation, cultural workshops and celebration of traditions. An Advisory Committee composed of representatives of each Aboriginal group in the province was responsible for developing the program and reviewing the proposals.

There has long been awareness among Aboriginal groups of the increasingly urgent need to preserve their culture by passing along knowledge to the next generation. In some cases, this program may build on efforts already initiated by Aboriginal organizations. These initiatives include: language programs that build pride and establish identity; traditional music programs for children; and events that encourage the interaction of elders and children through storytelling, craft, and going out on the land.

This program aims to build capacity among Aboriginal groups in the areas of knowledge and skills development related to the safeguarding of ICH. The need for such a program was highlighted by the high number of diverse proposals received. In total, 12 projects were funded under the program, with a maximum level of funding of \$15,000.

The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Program is now a regular funding component within the Department. For further information, contact Lucy Drown: [lucydrown@gov.nl.ca](mailto:lucydrown@gov.nl.ca) or call: (709) 729-1409.

## Preserving Mi'kmaq culture by passing it along... The Coast of Bays Arts and Exploration Centre

The Centre, administered by the Miawpukek Band Government, Conne River, delivers Aboriginal programs throughout the summer to educate and inform visitors about the rich heritage and culture of the Mi'kmaq of Newfoundland, including their traditions, customs, religion, land usage, arts and crafts. In April 2008, the Band officially gained ownership of the centre, and had a successful first season with over 500 visitors. Visitors and school students learned about the history of the Mi'kmaq through a temporary exhibit tracing their history from pre-European contact to the present day. From June until August the Glenn John Arts and Craft Centre developed traditional craft programs that targeted women, elders and youth.



The art of building both birch bark and caribou skin canoes was once lost



among many Mi'kmaq people of Newfoundland. In 2001 the Miawpukek Band Government carried out a training program to revive the skill. During the summer of 2008 the centre interpreted this art to the general public through the construction of a new caribou skin canoe. Phoebe Foster, Miawpukek Economic Development Officer noted that: "This art and craft that is unique to our culture must be preserved for future generations to carry the knowledge on. It is through successful programs like this one that we are given the opportunity to display our craft and to promote the skill to our community so the knowledge is not lost".

beyond. Over the course of three days, an average of 2,500 people experience the music, culture, crafts and food of the Mi'kmaq.

The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage program also supports the annual Conne River Powwow (see article in this issue). This is one of the largest events in the Coast and Bays region, attracting people from across the province and

## Through the eyes of a seal hunter... Torngâsok Cultural Centre

The Torngâsok Cultural Centre will be documenting a traditional seal hunt through the eyes of an Inuit hunter. The Centre partnered with the OKalaKatiget Society to film a hunter as he went out on the ice. The film captures the whole process of hunting and killing the seals, showing every part and explaining what is eaten or used. A DVD will be produced that will be sent to schools, colleges and universities in the province to raise awareness of the importance of this traditional activity to the Inuit. The use of Inuttitut on the DVD will help to safeguard this language.

## Labrador Metis Nation

The LMN is working to collect, safeguard and celebrate Inuit-Metis intangible cultural heritage. LMN employees received professional training from Martha MacDonald of the Labrador Institute, and Dale Jarvis, the Province's Intangible Cultural Heritage Officer. This allowed them to travel to the Inuit-Metis communities in the south of Labrador and gather information from knowledge-holders. The LMN also organized a successful Metis Friends and Family day with activities such as soap carving for children, an Elder's Storytelling tent, a traditional food-tasting tent, and other traditional activities.



## Tshikapisk Foundation, Sheshatshiu



The ACH program provided support for the Innu Banner Project that will give Innu youth the opportunity to explore their personal and cultural identity, family stories, observations and dreams through the media of photography, video and audio recording.

As a follow-up to the Windows and Mirror Project, the Tshikapisk Foundation is collaborating with the Quebec Labrador Foundation to sponsor artists Wendy Ewald and Eric Gottesman to design a project using photography and other artistic media to explore Innu relationships to the country/Nutshimit and to the newly intrusive Euro-Canadian society.

In 1969 Wendy Ewald spent the summer in Sheshatshit teaching photography to young people in a QLF arts and recreation program. Her 2007 reunion with some of her students sparked the idea of a new photography project. In workshops during 2008, Innu young people made photographs and maps that will be made into large banners to be posted in the community, marking paths that were regularly used by the Innu.

## Sheshatshiu Innu Band Council

In February 2008, a project was started to document the terms associated with fauna (animals, birds, insects, fish, amphibians) in the Innu language. This project was undertaken in collaboration with MUN's Department of Linguistics and the CURA project for Innu Language Development. The field research was conducted by Peter Armitage, an anthropologist familiar with the Innu language who has 20 years experience in conducting interviews with Innu experts on topics relating to the environment.

## St. George's Indian Band Council

The ACH Program supported the Band Council to produce cultural activities on Aboriginal Day that reflected the Mi'kmaq culture, including language, spirituality, crafts, games, foods and history. On Saturday, June 21, sixty-five people attended the Band's seventh annual Sunrise Ceremony on "Seal Rocks" hill. The ceremony was led by former Chief Violet Dawson, beginning with an opening prayer spoken in Mi'kmaq by twelve-year-old Andrea Bennett. "Aboriginal Day is the best day of the year!" said Andrea, who has been taking part in the St. George's Indian Band's celebrations since she was five years old. Participants learned how to make tobacco ties, dream catchers, spruce root baskets and traditional beading techniques. Canoe rides, storytelling and a talking circle were also part of the event.

## Exploits Native Women's Association

The ACH program supported an Elders Feast that included a craft and cultural awareness session. Held on November 22, one hundred and eleven people attended the feast and listened to traditional drumming. Bernadette Hanlon, Secretary/Treasurer of the Sple'tk First Nation Band, commented: "That's what this is all about, honouring our Elders; letting them know that we thank them for giving us guidance and for sharing their Mi'kmaw knowledge and wisdom with us. It is to show our respect for them".

# Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK)



*Submitted by the Federation of Newfoundland Indians*

It seems fitting with the registration process of our people through the formation of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band that the Federation of Newfoundland Indians (FNI) promote the gathering and teachings of our people.

Many aspects of culture are passed down through traditional knowledge. Languages, locations, customs, names, storytelling, etc. are all pieces of culture that are learned through Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK).

Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK) encompasses the spirituality and existence of the aboriginal community. ATK is knowledge that is accumulated within the aboriginal community membership as acquired and passed down through generations of peoples through spirituality in oral tradition that ensures the natural presence, restoration, preservation and

interpretation of aboriginal values and knowledge of the natural surrounding

Traditional Knowledge is the knowledge that is passed from generation to generation in a particular culture. In the case of Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge, most of the knowledge is passed down through storytelling and by experience. Below are examples of ATK that were captured in a series of interviews with aboriginal people from various communities.

## Traditional Medicine

"If some member of the family had a cut on the hand, the leg, elsewhere or anywhere on the body, then they would send us and identify a certain plant unique only to the marsh that we had to bring back that they would apply to the cut and that would help cure" *Brendan Sheppard*

"They would use the birch leaves and the cherry leaves as a bread poultice type thing for infections those sorts of things" *Tony John*

"For medicine mother would boil water which included various plants, berries and leaves. We would drink the broth for colds and other sicknesses. For cuts we would use flour and sap from trees." *Austin Francis Sr.*

## Traditional Foods

"We would share a lot. They would go in moose hunting and when they came back they would give us the share of the moose and we'd give them fish or something in return."

*Bernard White*

"We were also guided along the way that there's a time of year when you can't do that and don't ever kill a bird, a beach bird for instance at a certain time of year, moose, rabbit, and others because there's a time of year when they have young and if you kill the mothers there isn't going to be any food for us" *Brendan Sheppard*

## Traditional Language

"Growing up at that point in time, just listening to my mom and my grandmother speak, they spoke a language, and quite frankly I believe it was a, I'm only assuming that it was a broken French language. Probably French Mi'kmaq it could very well have been that" *Brendan Sheppard*

## Traditional Storytelling

"She was a great story teller and I remember her when I was just a boy coming to our house and visiting, so she told stories that even the older boys and girls from around the community just sat down, and you could hear a pin drop" *Brendan Sheppard*

*Photo from the Federation of Newfoundland Indians (FNI) Website.*

For more information on FNI, contact:  
P.O. Box 956 Corner Brook, NL A2H 6J3  
Phone: (709) 634-0996 Fax: (709) 639-3997  
Toll-free: 1-800-563-2549

<http://www.fni.nf.ca>



## The Miawpukek Traditional Powwow 2009

In 2009 the Miawpukek First Nation will celebrate its 14th annual traditional powwow.

Located on the south coast of Newfoundland, the Miawpukek First Nation Conne River is the only recognized Reserve on the island of Newfoundland. From July 3 - 5, 2009, traditional dancers, drummers, spiritual leaders, elders from across the Mi'kmaq Nation will converge on the most eastern Province to celebrate their traditions, culture, and spiritualism.

Along with many traditions and customs the entire region offers visitors the opportunity to explore the vast wilderness of the area. This three-day event offers travelers, friends and guests the opportunity to partake in activities and events such as; traditional dancing and chanting, sacred ceremonies, feasts, traditional food sampling, sharing of culture and traditions, making new friends, and renewing of old friends.

During this event many traditional Mi'kmaq craft vendors display their talents in handmade arts and crafts. This event is sponsored by the Miawpukek First Nation, Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Coast of Bays, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, and Heritage Canada.

### About Miawpukek

Miawpukek is the traditional Mi'kmaw name for the community. "Miawpukek" is used as the name of the community in most documents produced by Miawpukek First Nation Government. Documents produced elsewhere most often uses "Conne River". The name means "Middle River". Miawpukek became a permanent community sometime around 1822. Before 1822 it was one of many semi-permanent camping sites used by people who were at the time still nomadic and traveling throughout the Mi'kmaq Domain of Newfoundland, Labrador, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Maine.

Miawpukek Reserve was established according to traditional oral history in 1870. It was officially designated as Samiajj Miawpukek Indian Reserve under the Indian Act in 1987. Most members, as of June 1985, are registered Indians. The ancestries of community members include Mi'kmaq, Innu, Abenaki and European lines.



### The Miawpukek Traditional Powwow 2009 - July 3 - 5, 2009

Contacts: Colleen Lambert ([recreation@mfn.gov.ca](mailto:recreation@mfn.gov.ca)), Darlene Joe, Coletta Jeddore, Thelma Drew at 709-882-2470 or information at [www.mfn.gov.ca](http://www.mfn.gov.ca). The event is free to all visitors. Limited camping on site. Washrooms and showers available.

*Photos (top) Peter Doucette (bottom) Grand Chief Syliboy and Chief Mise'l Joe. Photos courtesy John Jeddore.*

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/johnjeddore/>